

Manuscript version: Author's Accepted Manuscript

The version presented in WRAP is the author's accepted manuscript and may differ from the published version or Version of Record.

Persistent WRAP URL:

<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/117578>

How to cite:

Please refer to published version for the most recent bibliographic citation information. If a published version is known of, the repository item page linked to above, will contain details on accessing it.

Copyright and reuse:

The Warwick Research Archive Portal (WRAP) makes this work by researchers of the University of Warwick available open access under the following conditions.

Copyright © and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable the material made available in WRAP has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

Publisher's statement:

Please refer to the repository item page, publisher's statement section, for further information.

For more information, please contact the WRAP Team at: wrap@warwick.ac.uk.

ACCEPTED VERSION – *JOURNAL OF GENDER STUDIES* – ACCEPTED 6/5/19**On being the 'gender person' in an academic department: constructions, configurations and implications****Emily F. Henderson, Centre for Education Studies, University of Warwick****Abstract**

A 'gender person' in an academic department someone who researches and/or teaches about gender, but whose primary affiliation is not to a gender studies department or centre. This role has particularly been discussed in relation to international development organisations, but has been neglected in relation to higher education institutions. The article reapplies Ferguson's (2015) 'gender person' framework to academics working as gender people in the conditions of contemporary academia. Three cases of different manifestations of the gender person role are explored in detail and analysed for the ways in which occupying the gender person role impacts upon academic careers and gender knowledge. The article contributes an elaborated concept of the 'gender person' in academia and provides empirical evidence of being the 'gender person'. The article particularly shows that relying on a 'gender person' as a form of gender mainstreaming renders both gender academics and academic departments vulnerable in different ways.

Keywords

Gender expertise; gender mainstreaming; women's and gender studies; institutionalisation of women's and gender studies; higher education

Introduction

A 'gender person' is, in the simplest definition of this colloquial expression, a professional whose expertise is related to gender issues. In higher education institutions, 'gender people' can take two forms: diversity workers who are predominantly on professional services contracts, and academics who deliver curricula, supervise projects and conduct academic research relating to gender. These roles can overlap; diversity work is often given to academics whose work relates to diversity and who visibly occupy the marginalised positions which diversity work seeks to redress (Padilla, 1994; Ahmed, 2012; Hirshfield & Joseph, 2012). In this article the focus is on academics who are 'gender people' in their institutions, i.e. gender specialists who are called upon to represent gender as an academic field in relation to teaching and research. While the 'gender person' construct has been neglected in relation to academic departments, the role of the 'gender person' has been discussed more thoroughly in relation to international development organisations (Ferguson, 2015; Mukhopadhyay, 2007; Unterhalter & North, 2010). The figure of the 'gender person' has particularly arisen as a result of gender mainstreaming policies which have asserted the relevance of gender to all development projects; it has therefore been seen as necessary to include gender experts in project teams (Smyth, 2007). The figure of the 'gender person' is inherently contradictory as, although this role assures the mainstreaming of gender across the organisation (i.e. gender is *decompartmentalised*), it also results in the *compartmentalisation* of gender within an individual (Ferguson, 2015). There is no doubt that being the 'gender person' in an international development organisation is a 'messy' position to occupy, and 'gender people' find themselves caught between unfeminist members of the organisation who devalue gender knowledge, and academics who accuse them of not being feminist enough (Ferguson, 2015). However it is also important to recognise that the higher education institutions where those critical academics work are also occupied by 'gender academics' who are positioned by their

institution in much the same way that international development 'gender people' are by their organisations. This article shines a spotlight on this neglected position.

As the article goes on to argue, the prevalence of the 'gender person' approach to mainstreaming means that serious consequences accompany the potential benefits of mainstreaming gender knowledge in academia. This article makes two key contributions to the ongoing debate in the women's and gender studies field about the modes and processes of institutionalisation of gender scholarship. Firstly, the article deploys Ferguson's (2015) careful theorisation of the 'gender person' in international development organisations to elucidate the equivalent construct in academic departments, in order to think through the specific institutional complexities of gender knowledge representation in higher education institutions. While this construct is currently discussed in 'corridor talk' among feminist academics (Gill, 2010), there is arguably a need to formally recognise the figure of the 'gender person' in order to better understand (i) the nature of the role and (ii) the consequences of occupying this role. This article carves out conceptual space for the recognition of the 'gender person' role as an internationally relevant construct. Secondly, the article provides valuable empirical evidence of the consequences of occupying the 'gender person' role in the contemporary academy, particularly regarding the risks of solely relying on individuals to deliver gender expertise, which evidence could be employed to reinforce feminist academics' bids for resourcing of centres for feminist knowledge production.

The 'gender person' in an academic department

The role of 'gender person'ⁱ in an academic department can take many different forms, and is a dynamic role that can be conferred and taken up in different contexts. For example, a 'gender person' can shake off this label when among a community of gender academics

(Krishna, 2007; AUTHOR, 2018a); likewise an academic who works in a gender department can be called in elsewhere to be the 'gender person' – to deliver a course or to contribute to a research bid. The specific focus of this article is on gender academics whose primary affiliation is *not* in a gender department. This is because the article is envisaged as a contribution to the long-standing 'autonomy/integration debate' (Hemmings, 2005, p. 101; see also eg. Rosenfelt, 1984), in which *autonomy* signifies creating centres for gender teaching and research, thus crafting a separate institutional location for gender knowledge, whereas *integration* entails the introduction of gender knowledge into existing disciplinary structures, often through 'gender people', otherwise known as mainstreaming the curriculum (Morley, 2007).

Importantly, neither autonomy nor integration occur in a political vacuum, as both processes represent institutions' orientations towards gender knowledge at a particular moment in time; this in turn is closely related to changes in the higher education sector, and the ways in which institutions interpret changes in the sector as imperatives to shape the provision of gender studies (Coate, 2006). In the UK, there has been a clear shift from autonomy (the creation of centres for the study of women and gender) towards integration, where gender studies courses are offered from within a variety of departments (Leathwood & Read, 2009). This move has accompanied the shift from the massification of higher education, where women's studies courses were often populated by women and mature students who would not have otherwise accessed higher education (Kirkup & Whitelegg, 2012), towards a move to neoliberal, employability-driven higher education approaches. In this era, women's studies centres in the UK suffered loss of student numbers and institutional mainstreaming policies led to a prevalence of the integration approach. However, although the current global higher education sector is characterized by increasingly neoliberal, marketised approaches (Deem

and Brehony, 2005; David, 2011; 2014), the integration and/or autonomy of gender studies has taken a different path in different country contexts (Stromquist, 2001). For example, in the US, the autonomy approach has remained strong (Ginsburg, 2008; Smith, 2013). In France, gender studies as a discipline has begun to flourish more recently, and the autonomy approach has been evidenced by the creation of new centres for gender knowledge as well as the integration of gender knowledge into departmental course offerings (ANEF, 2014). In India, the top-down policy from the University Grants Commission that universities should develop women's studies centres, women's studies courses and gender sensitization programmes has resulted in a proliferation of gender centres (Pappu, 2002; Sreenivas, 2015; Kanagasabai, 2018), as per the autonomy approach.

While the specific institutional-individual configurations of 'gender people' in academic departments may vary in different international policy contexts and across national higher education systems, this article stakes a claim for addressing the neglected construct of the 'gender person' as an *internationally* relevant construct. By addressing an internationally applicable 'gender person' construct, the article recognises the cross-pollination of gender knowledge, which also influences the ways in which gender academics participate in the institutionalisation of gender knowledge (Pereira, 2014; 2017). Firstly, gender knowledge has spread and evolved through international organisations and interconnected feminist movements (David, 2014; Smith, 2013); it is also necessary to recognise the well-nigh total domination of the US and the UK in the international gender knowledge publishing market which means that gender curricula around the world feature US- and UK-based perspectives (Wöhrer, 2016). Secondly, academic mobility has played a role – in the case of France, for example, many French gender academics are returnees from gender studies degrees in the US, which has undoubtedly had an effect on the canons of gender knowledge (Boyle, 2012;

Fassin, 2009). Thirdly, while the national and institutional configurations of the 'gender person' construct may differ, there are international common trends which are enforcing the precarity of academic careers (Nadolny & Ryan, 2013; Hancock et al., 2016; Herschberg, Benschop & van den Brink, 2018). As such, the construct of the 'gender person' is underpinned by a generalized precarity – the probability of remaining on fixed-term, insecure contracts for a long period after the doctorate (Lopes & Devan, 2018) – as well as a specific precarity, which is related to the insecure and changeable position of gender knowledge in HEIs (Stromquist, 2001; Pereira, 2017). An added condition here is that 'gender people' are likely to be women, who are also more likely to work in conditions of precarity in higher education (Courtois & O'Keefe, 2015). The 'gender person' then is a construct which is underpinned by precarity and instability of both knowledge and employment conditions.

'Gender person' – analytical framework

Ferguson's (2015) theorisation of 'gender people' in international development organisations sets out an analytical framework consisting of the different facets that comprise the role. Although the organisational dimensions of development organisations and higher education institutions are somewhat different, the role has marked similarities, so the framework can be usefully reapplied to the organisational context of academic departments. To summarise, Ferguson's 'gender person' role has four principal facets: (i) the 'gender person' is a broker of gender knowledge, (ii) the 'gender person' participates in and is subjected to the devaluation and simplification of gender knowledge, (iii) the 'gender person' faces the political question of whether they should do gender work even if it is unpaid or unrecognised, (iv) the 'gender person' engages in an ongoing process of compromise and negotiation over the status of gender knowledge. This section demonstrates the pertinence of the application of Ferguson's 'gender person' framework to academic departments by showing how the four

facets map onto existing literature about the institutionalization of women's and gender studies knowledge; the framework is then applied to the empirical study following the methods section.

(i) The 'gender person' is a broker of gender knowledge. Acting as a broker of gender knowledge means that the 'gender person' has to "sell" gender to skeptical colleagues and, in particular, senior colleagues with the power to finance gender activities' (Ferguson, 2015, p. 385). Acting as a broker for gender knowledge also appears in Howe's (1991, p. 103) essay on the institutionalization of women's studies in the US, where she states that 'committed feminist scholars' lobbied to 'gain[] recognition' for women's studies (see also ANEF, 2014).

(ii) The 'gender person' participates in and is subjected to the devaluation and simplification of gender knowledge. The second facet of Ferguson's (2015) 'gender person' framework is the devaluing and simplification of gender knowledge, where the 'gender person' ensures that 'gender knowledge is packaged and presented in a simple yet fundamentally inoffensive way' so that it can gain institutional traction (Ferguson, 2015, p. 385). This relates to Abbott's (1991, p. 189) essay, 'Feminist perspectives in sociology', where she describes gender knowledge as 'lumped under the "gender" label' (see also Leathwood & Read, 1999).

(iii) The 'gender person' faces the political question of whether they should do gender work even if it is unpaid or unrecognized. A third facet is the political question that the 'gender person' faces when gender knowledge is not funded or supported in other ways: 'If institutions are not willing to pay properly for gender expertise, should we do it anyway?'

(Ferguson, 2015, p. 388). This facet is common in the literature on the institutionalization of women's studies, regarding gender academics who are obliged to 'take on the work without extra pay, time or other resources' (Zmoroczek & Duchon, 1991, p. 12), who 'worked very hard in their own time to garner considerable external support' (Kirkup & Whitelegg, 2012, p. 9; see also Morley, 1999). This practice perpetuates a longstanding tradition of feminist academics institutionalising gender knowledge in an 'evangelical spirit' (Lowe & Lowe Benston, 1984, p. 2), 'rais[ing] the consciousness of students – and faculty alike' (Howe, 1991, p. 104) despite the risks of being in 'vulnerable positions of temporary faculty' (ibid., p. 106) and in a job market with 'a lack of full-time permanent posts' (Montgomery & Collette, 1997, p. 4). In short, this facet refers to the political drive to provide feminist knowledge even when this work is not funded or supported in other ways.

(iv) *The 'gender person' engages in an ongoing process of compromise and negotiation over the status of gender knowledge.* A final facet from Ferguson's (2015) framework is the ongoing process of 'compromise and negotiation' (ibid., p. 381) that the 'gender person' engages in – the 'constant defense of the validity of specialist gender expertise' (ibid., p. 388). Signs of these ongoing struggles are also evident in the literature on the institutionalisation of gender knowledge, as successes are often accompanied with awareness of their future as 'intensely vulnerable' (Aaron & Walby, 1991, p. 3; see also Morley, 1999).

The 'gender person' role in an academic department is located within a gendered and politicised individual, to whom gender knowledge is attached. While there is no hard and fast rule that the 'gender person' is a woman, and a cis-gendered woman at that, as Clare Hemmings (2011, p. 153) states in relation to gender studies, 'gender tends to (re)attach to women whether we like it or not' (see also AUTHOR, 2015). That the 'gender person' tends

to be a woman intersects with the institutional power structures that have in the past – and continue to – result in fewer women professors and leaders (Acker, 2010; Chanana, 2003; Morley, 2012; Walker, 1998), and which therefore reduces the likelihood of a 'gender person' taking up a top-level leadership role within an HEI. There is a further question of whether being the 'gender person' is inflected with a subordinate femininity that projects onto a 'gender person', independently of their gender identity – this brings questions of how different gender inflections play out in professional roles which also have inherent gender assumptions (Leathwood & Read, 2009; Morley, 1999). Layered onto the gender identity of the 'gender person' is the political orientation of feminism. While it is not always the case that the 'gender person' identifies as feminist, the third facet of the 'gender person' – the political obligation to do gender work even if it is unpaid or unrecognised – is explicitly related to the feminist drive to engage in feminist work *no matter what*. This phenomenon is akin to the concept of 'cultural taxation', where academics of colour and women academics are compelled on the basis of identity/ies to undertake diversity work in the academy to further institutional inclusivity (Padilla, 1994; Hirshfield & Joseph, 2012); here we could refer to 'cultural (knowledge) taxation', where gender academics are compelled to undertake extra gender knowledge work, often also on the basis of being women. In a holistic understanding of the 'gender person' construct, acting as a representative for gender knowledge in an academic department is also a gendered position and a political position. Through Ferguson's (2015) 'gender person' framework, reapplied to the 'gender person' in an academic department, it is possible to analyse the strategies involved in and consequences of being the 'gender person' in the light of the wider issues for the gender knowledge field.

Researching the 'gender person' – methods

The empirical research that underpins this article was an ethnographic study that explored the construction of conceptual knowledge production about gender at three national women's studies association conferences, in UK (FWSA, Nottingham, 2013), the US (NWSA, Cincinnati, 2013) and India (IAWS, Guwahati, 2014) (AUTHOR, 2016; 2019). Part of this study involved c. 10 gender scholars per conference charting the conceptualisations of gender that they witnessed and were involved in during the conferences. The participants were recruited through mailing lists and through personal connections via snowballing method. This article, rather than taking the conferences as a focus, is based on data from the first part of the in-depth, semi-structured interviews with these participants, where participants were asked about their institutional positionings in relation to the institutionalisation of women's and gender knowledge. The data on this issue are based on participants' experiences in a wide range of humanities and social sciences disciplines, and a variety of international settings including the UK, US and India, but also transnational perspectives resulting from international educational and professional trajectories.

19 of the 27 participants in the study discussed being or having been positioned as the 'gender person' in academic context/s (eg. in teaching, research, conference panels, publications). Given the ethical issues of researching with academics who may as such be easily identified, to avoid identification I do not include names of departments or institutions. Some participants were partially or wholly located in a gender department or research centre, but referred to 'gender person' experiences in other departments, or previous roles. Participant roles included eight permanent or tenure-track positions from lecturer (assistant professor) to full professor, as well as four temporary positions such as research officer, adjunct lecturer, and postdoctoral fellow, and seven part- and full-time doctoral students – at least two of whom also held other roles. Of the 19 participants included in the sample for this

article, two discussed institutions in the UK, six in North America, seven in India. Four further participants discussed multiple country contexts including at least one of the UK, US and India, as well as other European countries (again to avoid identification specific details are omitted). In terms of gender identity, 18 of the 19 participants used the pronouns she/her, and one used the non-binary pronouns ze/hir. All of the participants are referred to using self-selected pseudonyms.

The data analysed in this article are the responses to an interview prompt where I asked participants to tell me about their institutional role/s in relation to gender knowledge. In some cases participants directly discussed being the 'gender person', or used similar language to express this (as shown later in the article). In other cases it was less obvious, but discussions ranged around departmental contexts and issues and teaching, and covered similar issues. Sections of the interview transcripts which related to being the 'gender person' were identified and then analysed using the 'gender person' framework.

Constructions, configurations and implications of being the 'gender person' in an academic department

This section of the article presents three 'gender people' from the study as specific cases. These participants have been selected on the basis of the different manifestations of being a 'gender person' that they represent; they are also participants who discussed different national and international contexts and trajectories; finally, these are all participants whose interviews included substantial discussion of the 'gender person' role. Other participants' accounts are also referred to alongside the three key narratives to demonstrate the breadth of data on this topic. For each of the three principal participants, the four facets of the 'gender person' are applied to their accounts. To lead towards the second contribution of the article

(building the evidence base), strategies and practices of being a 'gender person' are also identified, and the data is analysed to explore the institutional consequences or implications of being the 'gender person'.

Rachel

At the time of the interview, Rachel was working as a research officer in a research centre in the UK which had a focus on gender. She had previously worked in a different institution, in a social sciences department, where she was 'very much' (Rachel's emphasis) designated as a 'gender person'; this retrospective account is focused on here.

(i) The 'gender person' is a broker of gender knowledge. Rachel narrated a specific incident which represented her status gender knowledge broker in her department:

I remember once getting called in to speak to some student who wanted to do something [on gender] and nobody had a clue what to do.

In this scenario, Rachel was approached as a gender knowledge broker between her colleagues and the student. According to the first facet of the framework, 'gender people' are called in to represent gender knowledge where it is structurally absent. Here the specific instance arose from student demand, where the lack of genuinely integrated gender knowledge in the department was made clear when a student requested to focus on gender in their work. Rachel was called upon as the 'gender person' to provide this knowledge.

(ii) The 'gender person' participates in and is subjected to the devaluation and simplification of gender knowledge. The above excerpt reflects the devaluation and simplification of gender knowledge through the expectation that Rachel, as a 'gender person', would have the specific expertise required to advise the student in question. Rachel's ambivalence about this incident

is reflected in her mode of expression, where she refers to '*some* student who wanted to do *something* [on gender]' (emphasis added), thus highlighting the disjuncture between specialist gender knowledge and the generalist gender knowledge broker she was expected to be in this incident.

(iii) *The 'gender person' faces the political question of whether they should do gender work even if it is unpaid or unrecognized.* While Rachel did not discuss this facet as clearly as other participants, she referred to her status in the department as the default gender person. She stated that initially 'there was only one other *woman* let alone one other gender specialist' (Rachel's emphasis). As such, I suggest that the ambivalence shown in the above excerpt where Rachel was 'called in' to be the 'gender person' can be interpreted as the reluctant enactment of the political duty of providing gender expertise even when this falls outside of official work obligations.

(iv) *The 'gender person' engages in an ongoing process of compromise and negotiation over the status of gender knowledge.* The fourth facet of being a 'gender person' is clearly discernible later in Rachel's account; she states that she 'used to kick off as well sometimes', meaning that she would protest against what she saw happening in her department with regards to gender knowledge. She quotes her colleagues as responding wordlessly, "Mm, mm", against her accusation of "This is *outrageous* what's happening here".

Discussion. Rachel's account of her previous role clearly demonstrates the role of 'gender person' in an academic department. As opposed to gender knowledge being genuinely integrated into this department, gender knowledge is compartmentalised in Rachel as the representative of the field. This is particularly stark because Rachel is also the only woman in

the department, and as such takes on the status of the “‘token wom[a]n” in [a] male department’ (Aaron & Walby, 1991, p. 2). As Rachel discussed,

there was *no* other woman or *no* other people who knew anything about gender and feminism, and I know that gender and feminism are two different things, but they weren’t doing anything like that (Rachel’s emphasis).

Rachel’s position as ‘gender person’ following the other woman colleague’s departure was reinforced by her role as the only woman, the only gender expert, and the only feminist, which relates to the idea of ‘cultural (knowledge) taxation’ discussed above. Here the precariousness of the integrated gender knowledge approach becomes evident. In an integrated model where gender knowledge is compartmentalized in one or two people, this model is vulnerable to those people leaving, as happened with Rachel and her colleague. When the colleague left, Rachel was the only gender person, and she herself was on a temporary contract. While the incident where Rachel was ‘called in’ to be the gender person was narrated as a one-off situation, the accumulated effect can be seen in another participant’s account, Nirja, a full professor with affiliations to a humanities department and a women’s studies centre in an Indian university. Nirja reported that she was ‘lecturing like mad’ on top of her university workload, giving invited guest lectures on gender in neighbouring higher education colleges. What is less clear here, and certainly harder to prove, is the possibility that academics who do not work on gender may be reluctant to *try* to teach or advise students about gender issues, perhaps out of fear of the feminist label, or the fear of getting it wrong – it therefore seems preferable that the ‘gender person’ be ‘called in’ to give ‘single lectures on other people’s courses’ (Hemmings, 2005, pp. 101, n. 103; see also AUTHOR, 2018b).

Edith

When I interviewed Edith, she was a part-time adjunct lecturer at a US institution, teaching what is known as 'composition', or academic writing. She had completed her PhD in a humanities discipline, but the gender-based dissertation topic was not clearly related to the discipline, to the extent that, as she stated, others hear about her work and exclaim, "'What's your degree in again?!... How is that- how is that [the discipline]?'". After finishing the PhD, she found a job in another country where she would be teaching in her PhD discipline and women's studies, but the job was cancelled, which was why she had to take the only option she could find – a composition teaching role.

(i) The 'gender person' is a broker of gender knowledge.

Edith acted as a broker of gender knowledge in her composition teaching, in that she integrated gender knowledge into the curriculum. Edith stated that, although 'gender is not directly related' to her teaching, she 'tr[ies] to work [it] in' by for example 'put[ting] in different readings that look at race and gender'. However it should be noted that here Edith is voluntarily acting as a gender knowledge broker, unlike Rachel who was 'called in'.

(ii) The 'gender person' participates in and is subjected to the devaluation and simplification of gender knowledge.

Because of the disalignment between Edith's PhD topic and the academic discipline within which she completed the PhD, and the situation of precarity within she found herself after the international job opportunity fell through, Edith had taken a job in a field which was not directly related to either her PhD or her discipline. As such, her job did not place any value on her gender knowledge, to the extent that any use of this knowledge was voluntary; she was a self-elected gender person. Edith described herself as being 'really scattered and split', 'in this weird place right now', and was even questioning her position in academia at all.

(iii) The 'gender person' faces the political question of whether they should do gender work even if it is unpaid or unrecognized.

As a self-elected gender person, unpaid and unrecognized gender work was a feature of Edith's account. In her composition teaching, as noted above, Edith integrated gender knowledge into the curriculum as a contribution to the institutionalisation of gender and feminist knowledge. Furthermore, Edith conducted unpaid gender research as research time was not included in her contract; this was in part to maintain her profile as a gender researcher for future job opportunities, but also as an important facet of her academic identity, as studying women's studies had been the reason Edith had decided to go into academia as a career.

(iv) The 'gender person' engages in an ongoing process of compromise and negotiation over the status of gender knowledge.

Because gender knowledge was not recognised in her current role, Edith was engaged in personal compromises and negotiations in relation to being the gender person. These played out at the micro level of her curriculum, where she took decisions as to when to teach mainstream curriculum and when to integrate gender knowledge. She was also engaged in decision-making processes with regard to her use of her own time to continue with her academic research. Finally, she was engaged in a wider struggle as to whether to continue striving to work in academia at all when her gender expertise was not resulting in job openings.

Discussion. While Rachel was a reluctant gender person, 'called upon' to provide generalist gender knowledge, Edith was a self-elected gender person. Rachel's situation was affected by

precarity in that gender knowledge was encapsulated in individuals who could leave – including herself, but she was also on a temporary contract so somewhat vulnerable in that departmental context. Precarity entered Edith's narrative through her difficulties in obtaining a job after her PhD, and after her experience of an overseas opportunity not working out. She and her partner moved to a different area of their state in the USA because he found a job, and she took a part-time role teaching composition after being unable to find any work for a year. She described herself as being the 'statistic mom' in the 'gendered contingent labour force'. This was the backdrop to Edith's situation as a self-elected gender person teaching composition courses, integrating gender into the curriculum as a personal project. This practice was common to a number of participants in the study; for example, Susan, a USA-based doctoral student in a vocational social sciences department, stated that ze 'infused' hir adjunct teaching in the department with gender issues; Meeta, an assistant professor teaching on a language course in an Indian university, referred to 'sneak[ing] in [her] own readings'. The specific feature that characterised Edith's account of being an unrecognised, self-elected gender person was the fact that she was considering leaving academia. While women are known to leave academia in the early career stages at a proportionally higher rate than men (Nielsen, 2017), there is also an added knowledge or field aspect to this for women gender researchers, who are potentially doubly disadvantaged in the job market by their gender and their field of study.

Priya

At the time of interview in 2014, Priya was conducting her doctoral research in a social sciences department in a UK university, having gained a vocational social science Master's from an Indian university and a gender Master's in the USA. As shown in the case of Edith, several participants included reflections on the PhD process, even if they had completed their

doctorate some years before. For those participants who had already gained their PhD, it was clear that their institutional positioning as doctoral students was influenced by their own and their supervisors' status as gender people, at times producing a double 'gender person' effect.

(i) The 'gender person' is a broker of gender knowledge. Priya had applied to the department and the institution where she was studying for her PhD because she wanted to work with a specific gender academic who was located within that department. Priya had no affiliation at all with the discipline and department in which she was enrolled; she stated that she 'never in [her] life thought [she] would be doing a PhD in [that social sciences discipline]'. However, shortly after Priya began her PhD, the academic moved to join a gender department in another university. Unlike Rachel, Priya's supervisor had been on a permanent contract, but she had been the only gender person in her department; she had occupied an uncomfortable gender person role in the department and had only 'used it [the department] as a space where her office was'. As the only gender knowledge broker in the department, the supervisor had also represented the only tie to the department for Priya, who then found that she both had no gender knowledge broker to support her in the department and also that she acted as gender knowledge broker in her PhD cohort – the double 'gender person' effect.

(ii) The 'gender person' participates in and is subjected to the devaluation and simplification of gender knowledge. Priya continued to be supervised from a distance by her original supervisor, but her remaining institutional link was a second supervisor, who was very supportive but who did not have relevant expertise. Priya recounted an occasion where her departmental cohort gave presentations on their work, which she struggled to understand. She went on to say that the other students were able to understand her presentation because her work is about 'people's lives' and 'is very um almost mundane – it's stuff I think anybody

might understand'. Here Priya devalues her own research against the technically advanced work of the other students in her department, who were more closely aligned with the disciplinary affiliation of the department.

(iii) The 'gender person' faces the political question of whether they should do gender work even if it is unpaid or unrecognized. The question of research supervision arises from Priya's story – should the gender person still continue taking responsibility for a doctoral student even after leaving the institution? Should another gender person be asked to step in, regardless of the relevance of the topic or workload considerations? Part of Priya's strategy for managing her isolation was to seek out gender events and academics in other departments. In a case like this, should other gender people take responsibility for advising the student and providing the curriculum, even if they are from another department and doing so in their own time? Priya's case again highlights the vulnerability of an integration approach that relies on the compartmentalization of gender knowledge in one gender person.

(iv) The 'gender person' engages in an ongoing process of compromise and negotiation over the status of gender knowledge. As noted above, Priya negotiated the status of her research with her PhD cohort, who praised her research for its originality but were engaging in 'starkly different' (Priya's emphasis) projects to the extent that they were enrolled in different methodology classes from her and gave presentations she 'didn't understand', which led her to devalue her research as 'mundane'. Like other participants who did not find gender expertise in their departments, such as Meeta, who worked with an autonomous women's studies group alongside her formal institutional role, Priya's practice was to seek gender knowledge elsewhere. Priya attended events within the gender department at her university,

but she found that the type of gender work she was doing was not represented in the gender studies department. This resulted in her impression of 'belong[ing] to *no* department'.

Discussion. Of the participants who reflected on their doctoral journeys (past or present), some had been supervised by academics who had limited or no understanding of their topics – because they had followed funding, or prioritised the discipline or department over gender expertise, or because they had only decided to focus on gender once they had already started. An example of this was Margaret, who was an assistant professor in a gender department in a USA university; her PhD had been a relatively 'anomalous project' in the social sciences department in which she had been enrolled, and at times she felt she was 'pretty much unadvised' because within her department 'none of her advisors had a clue about anything that [she] was doing', and she was the main gender researcher in her doctoral cohort. As noted in Rachel's case, the risk of relying on gender people to represent gender knowledge is that they may leave – and that doctoral students studying gender topics may then be left unadvised, or students may start a doctoral programme without an adequately qualified supervisor, with the knock-on effect on the potential quality of the students' research and the opportunities made available to them. It is important to note that doctoral journeys are rarely smooth (Burford, 2017; Grant, 2008; Lee & Williams, 1999), and as such not all the isolation and supervisor issues that participants faced can be attributed to being supervised by and/or being the gender person. However there are issues to point to here which are specific to being a gender person/doctoral researcher, which relate to the vulnerability of research students who may find themselves without any departmental affiliation if the gender person leaves. This vulnerability may then translate into a scenario akin to Edith's predicament, where the disalignment between her PhD topic and her disciplinary affiliation may have contributed to her struggles to find a position in the job market.

Conclusion

This article set out two major aims: to develop a nuanced understanding of the 'gender person' role in academic departments, and to provide empirical evidence of the practices involved in and the consequences of being the 'gender person' in academia. The 'gender person' construct includes four facets which were adapted from Ferguson's (2015) article on the 'gender person' role in international development organisations: (i) the 'gender person' acts as knowledge broker in all manner of situations, including with colleagues, peers and students; (ii) the 'gender person' both experiences and participates in the devaluing and simplification of gender knowledge when, for example, approached for advice on an unfamiliar (but gender-related) topic; (iii) the 'gender person' at times does unpaid or unrecognised gender work out of a political commitment to feminism; (iv) the 'gender person' engages in compromise and negotiation by both accepting to be the 'gender person' and resisting this role. The 'gender person' construct can be understood as representing the field of gender knowledge as a whole within an institutional structure, and as a gendered and politicised individual. This means that a 'gender person' may be marked out from others not just by their research field, but also by their gendered and politicised embodiment of the research field, as discussed above in relation to 'cultural (knowledge) taxation'.

Conceptualised thus, the 'gender person' appears less as a lone human pioneer against a faceless brick wall of an institution, and more as an actor working among other actors within systems, processes and structures that need to be named as such to be changed (Ahmed, 2012).

An important institutional implication of being the 'gender person' – and relying on a 'gender person' to represent gender knowledge in an institutional structure – is the fragility of gender

knowledge, and this fragility is deepened by the precarity of academic careers in the contemporary academy. For if gender knowledge is contained within a single person, it can also leave with that person, as shown above with Rachel's and Priya's cases. A second implication concerns the field of gender knowledge: if there is just one 'gender person' who is 'called in' to cover all gender issues, there is a risk of de-specialisation of gender knowledge. A third implication concerns the individual – and therefore the field. Several participants referred to being isolated and lonely, and to feeling like misfits in their departments. The consequences of this isolation include a lack of community and critical engagement, but may also extend to a 'gender person' leaving academia altogether. Finally, it is important to consider the indirect implications that extend to doctoral students, who may be working without expert supervision, or who may find they are marginalised within their department owing to their supervisor's marginalisation (or departure): these students are, after all, potentially the next generation of gender academics. But the 'gender person' does not passively await these implications. Through the participants' accounts I have shown that 'gender people' engage in a number of strategies to manage the role. They maintain their gender expertise by conducting self-funded research and becoming involved in gender centres and groups within and outside of universities; they 'infuse' their teaching with gender knowledge, mainstreaming the curriculum as a political act. They also balance acquiescing to demands to providing generalist gender knowledge with actively protesting about this (as seen in Rachel's account).

To conclude, this article makes a case for the 'both/and strategy' for the institutionalization of gender knowledge, where both integration and autonomy approaches are practiced (John, 2008; Lykke, 2010). Without the existence of the 'gender person' in different disciplinary contexts, the curriculum would not stand a chance of being mainstreamed. However, relying

on a 'gender person' to embody the integration approach renders departments vulnerable, from the simple fact that a gender person may leave. This article has elucidated the neglected construct of the 'gender person' role in academic departments, and has revealed some of the implications of occupying this role, for the individual and the department. The article has also provided empirical evidence to support claims for a both/and institutionalization strategy, which is a discussion that is often held in conceptual claims alone. This article argues that, in order to support an integration approach, proper resourcing and institutional protection of gender centres and networks are necessary to provide havens of community and knowledge-sharing for both academics and students alike, where the 'gender person' can share the work of embodying the field.

Conflict of interest

The author is aware of no conflict of interest.

Funding

This article includes data collected as part of an ESRC-funded doctoral studentship.

References

AUTHOR (2015).

AUTHOR (2016).

AUTHOR (2018a).

AUTHOR (2018b).

AUTHOR (2019).

- Aaron, J., & Walby, S. (1991). Introduction: Towards a Feminist Intellectual Space. In J. Aaron & S. Walby (Eds.), *Out of the margins: women's studies in the nineties* (pp. 1-6). London: Falmer Press.
- Abbott, P. (1991). Feminist Perspectives in Sociology: The Challenge to 'Mainstream' Orthodoxy. In J. Aaron & S. Walby (Eds.), *Out of the margins: women's studies in the nineties* (pp. 181-190). London: Falmer Press.
- Acker, S. (2010). Gendered Games in Academic Leadership. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 20 (2), 129-152.
- Ahmed, S. (2012). *On being included: racism and diversity in institutional life*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Association nationale des études féministes (ANEF). (2014). *Le genre dans l'enseignement supérieur et la recherche: livre blanc*. Paris: la Dispute.
- Boyle, C. (2012). Post-Queer (Un)Made in France? *Paragraph*, 35(2), 265-280.
doi:10.3366/para.2012.0057
- Burford, J. (2017). Not writing, and giving 'zero-f**ks' about it: queer(y)ing doctoral 'failure'. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 38(4), 473-484.
doi:10.1080/01596306.2015.1105788
- Chanana, K. (2003). Visibility, gender and the careers of women faculty in an Indian university. *McGill Journal of Education/Revue des sciences de l'éducation de McGill*, 38(3), 381-389.
- Coate, K. (2006). Imagining women in the curriculum: the transgressive impossibility of women's studies. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(4), 407.
- Courtois, ADM; O'Keefe, T; (2015) Precarity in the ivory cage: Neoliberalism and casualisation of work in the Irish higher education sector. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, 13 (1), 43-66.

- David, M. (2011). Overview of researching global higher education: challenge, change or crisis? *Contemporary Social Science: Journal of the Academy of Social Sciences*, 6(2), 147-163.
- David, M. E. (2014). *Feminism, gender and universities: politics, passion and pedagogies*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate.
- Deem, R., & Brehony, K. J. (2005). Management as ideology: the case of 'new managerialism' in higher education. *Oxford Review of Education*, 31(2), 217-235.
doi:10.1080/03054980500117827
- Fassin, É. (2009). *Le sexe politique genre et sexualité au miroir transatlantique*. Paris: Éd. de l'EHESS.
- Ferguson, L. (2015). "This Is Our Gender Person". *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 17(3), 380-397. doi:10.1080/14616742.2014.918787
- Gill, R. (2010). Breaking the silence: The hidden injuries of the neoliberal university. In R. Ryan-Flood & R. Gill (Eds.), *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process : Feminist Reflections* (pp. 228-244). London: Routledge.
- Ginsberg, A. E. (2008). Triumphs, Controversies, and Change: Women's Studies 1970s to the Twenty-First Century. In A. E. Ginsberg (Ed.), *The evolution of American women's studies : reflections on triumphs, controversies, and change* (1st ed., pp. 9-37). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Grant, B. M. (2008). Agonistic Struggle: Master-slave dialogues in humanities supervision. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 7(1), 9-27.
doi:10.1177/1474022207084880
- Hancock, S., Clegg, S., Crossouard, B., Kahn, P., & Weller, S. (2016). Who is the newer researcher into higher education? Locating ourselves in shifting terrains. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 35(2), 282-295.

doi:10.1080/07294360.2015.1087384

- Hemmings, C. (2005). The Life and Times of Academic Feminism. In R. Braidotti & A. v. Baren (Eds.), *The making of European women's studies: a work in progress report on curriculum development and related issues in gender education and research* (pp. 99-123). Utrecht: ATHENA Advanced Thematic Network in Activities in Women's Studies in Europe.
- Hemmings, C. (2011). *Why stories matter: the political grammar of feminist theory*. Durham N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Henderson, E. F. (2015). *Gender pedagogy: Teaching, learning and tracing gender in higher education*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Henderson, E. F. (2016). *Eventful Gender: An Ethnographic Exploration of Gender Knowledge Production at International Academic Conferences*. PhD thesis awarded by UCL Institute of Education.
- Henderson, E. F. (2018a). Feminist conference time: aiming (not) to have been there. In Y. Taylor & K. Lahad (Eds.), *Feeling Academic in the Neoliberal University : Feminist Flights, Fights and Failures* (pp. 33-60). Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan US.
- Henderson, E. F. (2018b). The (un)invited guest? Feminist pedagogy and guest lecturing. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 1-6. doi:10.1080/13562517.2018.1527766
- Henderson, E. F. (2019). *Gender, Definitional Politics and 'Live' Knowledge Production: Contesting Concepts at Conferences*. New York, NY; London: Routledge.
- Herschberg, C., Benschop, Y., & van den Brink, M. (2018). Selecting early-career researchers: the influence of discourses of internationalisation and excellence on formal and applied selection criteria in academia. *Higher Education*, 76(5), 807-825. doi:10.1007/s10734-018-0237-2
- Hirshfield, L. E., & Joseph, T. D. (2012). 'We need a woman, we need a black woman':

- gender, race, and identity taxation in the academy. *Gender and Education*, 24(2), 213-227. doi:10.1080/09540253.2011.606208
- Howe, F. (1991). Women's Studies in the United States: Growth and Institutionalization. In A. Rao (Ed.), *Women's studies international: Nairobi and beyond* (pp. 103-121). New York: Feminist Press.
- John, M. (2008). Introduction. In M. John (Ed.), *Women's Studies in India: a reader* (pp. 1-22). Gurgaon: Penguin.
- Kanagasabai, N. (2018). Possibilities of transformation: Women's Studies in Tier II cities in Tamil Nadu, India. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 1-14. doi:10.1080/01596306.2018.1448702
- Kirkup, G., & Whitelegg, E. (2012). The legacy and impact of Open University women's/gender studies: 30 years on. *Gender and Education*, 25(1), 6-22. doi:10.1080/09540253.2012.728569
- Krishna, S. (2007). Feminist Perspectives and the Struggle to Transform the Disciplines: Report of the IAWS Southern Regional Workshop. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 14(3), 499-515. doi:10.1177/097152150701400307
- Leathwood, C., & Read, B. (2009). *Gender and the changing face of higher education: a feminized future*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Lee, A., & Williams, C. (1999). "Forged in fire: Narratives of trauma in PhD supervision pedagogy. *Southern Review*, 32(1), 6-26.
- Lopes, A., and Dewan, I. A. (2018). "Precarious Pedagogies? Impact of Casual and Zero-Hour Contracts in Higher Education." *Journal of Feminist Scholarship*, 7 (Fall), 28-42.
- Lowe, M., & Lowe Benston, M. (1984). The uneasy alliance of feminism and academia. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 7(3), 177-183. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395(84)90008-6

- Lykke, N. (2010). *Feminist studies: a guide to intersectional theory, methodology and writing*. London: Routledge.
- Montgomery, F., & Collette, C. (1997). Introduction. In F. Montgomery & C. Collette (Eds.), *Into the melting pot: teaching women's studies in the new millennium* (pp. 1-12). Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Morley, L. (1999). *Organising feminisms: The micropolitics of the academy*. Basingstoke: Macmillan P.
- Morley, L. (2007). Sister-matic: gender mainstreaming in higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 12(5), 607.
- Morley, L. (2012). The rules of the game: women and the leaderist turn in higher education. *Gender and Education*, 25(1), 116-131. doi:10.1080/09540253.2012.740888
- Mukhopadhyay, M. (2007). Mainstreaming gender or 'streaming' gender away: feminists marooned in the development business. In A. Cornwall, E. Harrison, & A. Whitehead (Eds.), *Feminisms in development: contradictions, contestations, and challenges* (pp. 135-149). London ; New York: Zed Books.
- Nadolny, A., & Ryan, S. (2013). McUniversities revisited: a comparison of university and McDonald's casual employee experiences in Australia. *Studies in Higher Education*, 40(1), 142-157. doi:10.1080/03075079.2013.818642
- Nielsen, M. W. (2017). Reasons for Leaving the Academy: a Case Study on the 'Opt Out' Phenomenon among Younger Female Researchers. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 24(2), 134-155. doi:10.1111/gwao.12151
- Padilla, A. M. (1994). Ethnic Minority Scholars, Research, and Mentoring: Current and Future Issues. *Educational Researcher*, 23(4), 24-27. doi:10.2307/1176259
- Pappu, R. (2002). Constituting a Field: Women's Studies in Higher Education. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 9(2), 221-234. doi:10.1177/097152150200900206

- Pereira, M. d. M. (2014). The Importance of Being “Modern” and Foreign: Feminist Scholarship and the Epistemic Status of Nations. *Signs*, 39(3), 627-657.
- Pereira, M. d. M. (2017). *Power, knowledge and feminist scholarship: an ethnography of academia*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Rosenfelt, D. (1984). What women's studies programs do that mainstreaming can't. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 7(3), 167-175. doi:[https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395\(84\)90007-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395(84)90007-4)
- Smith, B. G. (2013). *Women's studies: the basics*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Smyth, I. (2007). Talking of gender: words and meanings in development organisations. *Development in Practice*, 17(4-5), 582-588. doi:[10.1080/09614520701469591](https://doi.org/10.1080/09614520701469591)
- Sreenivas, D. (2015). Between Politics and Discipline: Gender Studies in an Institutional Setting. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 22(2), 265-281. doi:[10.1177/0971521515574607](https://doi.org/10.1177/0971521515574607)
- Stromquist, N. P. (2001). Gender studies: A global perspective of their evolution contribution, and challenges to comparative higher education. *Higher Education*, 41(4), 373-387. doi:[10.1023/a:1017501308449](https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1017501308449)
- Unterhalter, E., & North, A. (2010). Assessing gender mainstreaming in the education sector: depoliticised technique or a step towards women's rights and gender equality? *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 40(4), 389-404. doi:[10.1080/03057925.2010.490358](https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2010.490358)
- Walker, M. (1998). Academic Identities: women on a South African landscape. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 19(3), 335-354. doi:[10.1080/0142569980190304](https://doi.org/10.1080/0142569980190304)
- Wöhrer, V. (2016). Gender studies as a multi-centred field? Centres and peripheries in academic gender research. *Feminist Theory*, 17(3), 323-343. doi:[10.1177/1464700116652840](https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700116652840)

Zmoroczek, C., & Duchen, C. (1991). What *are* those women up to? Women's Studies and Feminist Research in the European Community. In J. Aaron & S. Walby (Eds.), *Out of the margins: women's studies in the nineties* (pp. 11-29). London: Falmer Press.

Acknowledgements

This article includes data collected as part of an ESRC-funded doctoral studentship. Thanks to Holly Henderson for her engagement with the thought process for this article, and to the reviewers for their hugely helpful comments. Thanks also to all the 'gender people' who have taught and inspired me.

Notes

ⁱ From hence 'gender person' is used to designate an academic who is a 'gender person'.